

IN THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently amended) An optical fiber laser comprising:

a laser cavity defined by first and second reflective devices, the laser cavity comprising ~~an~~ a cladding pumped optical fiber lasing medium coupled between the first and second reflective devices;

a multi-mode pump source; and

a combiner having at least first, second and third ports, wherein an output of the multi-mode pump source is operatively coupled to the first port of the combiner, and the combiner is coupled at its second and third ports within the laser cavity;

the combiner comprising a tapered fiber bundle and being configured to couple pump light from the multi-mode pump source into the laser cavity utilizing mode-based coupling without the use of wavelength-based coupling.

2. (Canceled)

3. (Currently amended) The optical fiber laser as recited in claim 2 1, wherein the cladding pumped fiber includes a rare earth doped core.

4. (Canceled)

5. (Previously presented) The optical fiber laser as recited in claim 1, wherein at least one of the first and second reflective devices comprises a fiber Bragg grating.

6. (Original) The optical fiber laser as recited in claim 5, wherein the fiber Bragg grating has a high index coating formed thereon.

7. (Previously presented) The optical fiber laser as recited in claim 1, wherein the first and second reflective devices comprise at least one of a dielectric film mirror, an interference filter, a broad metal mirror, and a polished fiber end.

8. (Original) The optical fiber laser as recited in claim 1, wherein the lasing medium comprises a single-mode fiber.

9. (Canceled)

10. (Canceled)

11. (Original) The optical fiber laser as recited in claim 1, wherein the optical fiber laser is configured for bidirectional pumping of the laser cavity.

b 12. (Currently amended) A method for combining laser light with pump light in an optical fiber laser device having a laser cavity defined by first and second reflective devices, the laser cavity comprising an a cladding pumped optical fiber lasing medium coupled between the first and second reflective devices, the method comprising the steps of:

positioning a combiner within the laser cavity, the combiner having at least first, second and third ports, the combiner being positioned so as to be coupled at its second and third ports within the laser cavity; and

coupling a multi-mode pump source for exciting the lasing medium to the first port of the combiner;

the combiner comprising a tapered fiber bundle and being configured to couple pump light from the multi-mode pump source into the laser cavity utilizing mode-based coupling without the use of wavelength-based coupling. Fig 3

13. (Canceled)

14. (Currently amended) The method as recited in claim 13 ~~13~~ 12, wherein the cladding pumped fiber includes a rare earth doped core.

15. (Canceled)

16. (Previously presented) The method as recited in claim 12, wherein at least one of the first and second reflective devices has a low index coating formed thereon.

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enc 17. (Previously presented) The method as recited in claim 12, wherein the lasing medium comprises a single-mode fiber.

18. (Canceled)
